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ABSTRACT

Fund raising activities are increasingly important for colleges and universities, as state and federal support diminishes and tuition has not adequately compensated for the public decreases. Thus, a school's faculty is a promising area for potential giving since these professionals are typically donors to a variety of community and nonprofit organizations. This study examined why faculty chose to contribute to their employing institution. A questionnaire mailed in spring 1997 to full-time faculty at three universities (a research university, a regional comprehensive university, and a liberal arts institution) queried respondents on demographic information, motivations for giving, and fund-raising strategies. There were 207 responses. Responses to the demographic questions revealed that half of all faculty who contributed held the rank of professor, were tenured, and were not graduates of their employing institution. Primary motives identified for giving included: altruism; a sense of social responsibility; self-fulfillment; professional attitude; conviction; and institutional loyalty. In response to fund-raising strategies, respondents rated telephone solicitation as the most effective. Tables summarize responses by institution type, by demographic data, and by motivation. (RH)

Faculty As Donors:

Why They Give To Their Employing Institutions

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"Faculty As Donors:
Why They Give to their Employing Institutions"

Abstract

Fund raising activities are increasingly important for college and university operations, and this importance has led to the exploration of new potential giving markets. An area of particular promise is the faculty body. These highly-specialized and highly-educated professionals are typically donors to a variety of community and non-profit agencies, and have only begun to be approached by college development offices. The current study examines why these faculty choose to contribute to their employing institution, and offers an conceptualization of giving and exchange theory.

The increasing importance and expanding missions of public higher education have been accompanied during the past decade with static growth. With public support which has, at best, kept pace with inflation, and with ever-greater responsibilities to face, it is understandable that public colleges and universities have turned increasingly to the private sector to help meet their basic needs and to pursue their goals. Private giving to higher education in past provided a "margin of excellence" (Leslie & Ramey, 1988) for recruiting and retaining students and faculty. As state and federal monies have become increasingly restrictive and have diminished, tuition has attempted, unsuccessfully, to adequately compensate for these state and federal decreases.

One segment of the potential donor population that has long been ignored by researchers and experts alike in fund raising is the faculty constituency. Experts have identified faculty as a major stakeholder groups in college and universities, thereby elevating faculty support to that of a crucial component to the overall success of the fund raising effort (Rowland, 1986). Ironically, there appears to be an absence of theory and scholarly research addressing faculty motivation for making philanthropic contributions to the fund raising efforts of their employing institutions.

The purpose for conducting this study was to obtain valid and reliable information pertaining to higher

education faculty motivations with regard to fund raising at their employing institutions. Accordingly, the study was designed to explore factors which may influence faculty motivations for making monetary contributions, the effects of institutional factors and faculty demographics on faculty giving patterns, and the types of solicitation which influence the willingness of faculty to contribute.

Faculty as Donors

Pezzullo and Brittingham (1990) asserted that American colleges and universities have grown increasingly dependent on private voluntary support over the last two decades because of the decline in governmental funding and the increasing need for unrestricted dollars to pursue excellence in programs. This contention is supported by data from the American Association of Fund Raising Council and the National Center for Education Statistics, which have suggested that philanthropic support for higher education institutions represents a small but growing proportion of institutional revenue for both public and private institutions. Moreover, the nature of charitable gifts affords institutions a great deal more latitude than money coming from traditional sources of revenue. As a consequence, philanthropic contributions have become an increasingly important source of revenue for colleges and universities, a trend which will only be amplified if

current revenue patterns continue at their current rate (Howard, 1993).

The act of fund raising is a dignified process based on marketing principles and exchange values. In this voluntary exchange, the contributor offers a value to the organization without any expectation of a material return (apart from the tax deductibility authorized by federal and state governments), although non-monetary benefits are frequently gained. The non-material reasons for making gifts are numerous: belonging, recognition, satisfaction in supporting a worthy cause, making a difference in program quality or a community, and a sense of ownership in activities. As such, the practice of fund raising is about relationships more than it is about money (Duronio & Loessin, 1991; Grace, 1991).

Conceptual Framework of the Study

A variety of conceptual approaches have addressed the motivations of individuals to act (structural functionalism, conflict theory, charity theory, exchange theory, symbolic interaction, to name but a few). Of these, exchange theory appears to be the most applicable in understanding the motivations of faculty to give to their employing institution. The rationale for the identification of exchange theory is that it assumes that the trade or exchange among individuals of valued objects or sentiments

is the basis of social order (Skidmore, 1975). This theory combines an economic model of human behavior and some basic assumptions of operant conditioning to show that stable social norms can emerge as a consequence of individual interests (Homans, 1974). Assumed, then, is that individuals are self-interested, and are motivated to an act or to interact as a result of rewards (either intrinsic or extrinsic). Intrinsic rewards are their own reward and generally do not possess any utilitarian value. Conversely, extrinsic rewards result in some gain of a valued item. Although not exclusive, this typology is reflective of Thibaut and Kelly's Endogenous and Exogenous Rewards (see Michener & DeLamater, 1994; Skidmore, 1975; Thibaut & Kelley, 1958).

In 1950, Homans presented a number of universal propositions about exchange among human beings. These propositions, in general, were that "the more that people interact, the more they become like each other, and the more that people interact, the more their sentiments and actions become alike" (Collins, 1988, p. 340). Therefore, through interaction, the participants develop "norms" and a group acquires a common, undergirding culture. These propositions were modified by Blau (1964). Homans coined the term "social exchange" in 1958, but many of the principles, along with those of Blau's interpretation, are not necessarily concerned with exchange as much as with individual

motivations for behavior. The combination of giving postulates and exchange theory, then, hold the potential to account for giving by individuals and the private sector (Drachman, 1983).

Research Methods

The sample for the study was comprised of full-time faculty donors at three different universities, representing a Carnegie Classification research university, a regional comprehensive university, and a liberal arts institution. The institutions, which were selected due to their willingness to participate, included the University of Alabama at Huntsville (research), the University of North Alabama (comprehensive regional), and the University of Montavello (liberal arts). Utilizing the resources of each institution's advancement office, a target of 100 current full-time faculty donors were randomly selected from each institution. Due to advancement office data availability, a total of 111 were identified for participation at the liberal arts institution, 95 were identified at the comprehensive university, and 100 at the research university.

To collect data, a researcher-developed survey instrument was mailed to all 306 subjects in the spring of 1997. The instrument consisted of three sections: demographic information, motivations for giving, and fund

raising solicitation strategies. The six demographic questions were constructed to validate the respondent was a current full-time faculty member and current donor at their employing institution. The motivation for giving section consisted of 30 potential factors which may motivate a faculty member to give to their employing institution. These factors were selected and identified in the research and practitioner literature. The third section of the survey, fund raising solicitation strategies, consisted of four variables relating to the processes to which faculty responded to provide their gifts. For all items, a modified Likert-type scale was utilized, where a rating of "1" indicated no importance of the factor in a decision to make a contribution, "3" indicated no opinion of the variable, and "5" indicated the variable was very important in the faculty members' decision to make a gift.

To validate the instrument, a jury of 11 experts in fund raising reviewed the survey for content, style, and clarity. Additionally, faculty donors at doctoral granting institution participated in a pilot-test, resulting in a Cronbach coefficient alpha of .9477 for the raw variables.

Results

After two follow-up mailings during the spring of 1997, a total of 207 survey instruments (67.6%) were returned from the three institutions. This response included 80 of the 95

mailed to the comprehensive university faculty (84.2%), 63 of the 100 from the research university (63%), and 64 of the 111 mailed to the liberal arts institution faculty (57.7%). As illustrated in Table 1, however, not all responses were usable. With strict adherence to the criteria developed for participation in the study, 183 of the 207 returned surveys were eligible to used in data analysis.

Responses to the demographic section of the questionnaire revealed that half of all faculty who contributed held the academic rank of professor (50%), were tenured (82%), and were not graduates of their employing institution (78%). Respondents had varied lengths of work experience at their employing institutions, ranging from 36% who had ten years or less of service, to 35% who had between 11 and 20 years service, and 29% who had over 20 years service. These data are presented in Table 2.

For the second section of the survey, mean scores were used to determine the primary motives identified as important or very important by the survey respondents. The data analysis revealed six motives with mean scores above an overall mean average of 3.00 (see Table 3). The six primary motives identified by the analysis for faculty to contribute to their employing institutions were altruism (mean 3.08), a sense of social responsibility to the institution (3.20), self-fulfillment (3.30), professional attitude (3.34), conviction (3.34), and institutional loyalty (3.66).

A Chi-square analysis was used to test for homogeneity of employing institutions for each Likert-type scaled motive. Based on the results of these analyses, significant differences were found for five of the motives at the .05 level. The five motives identified as having significant differences based on institutional type were conviction, self-fulfillment, celebration, emotional attachment, and organization mission (see Table 3 for p values).

A Chi-square procedure was also used to test whether a relationship existed between the categories of Likert-type responses for each motive and the demographic variables identified in section one of the questionnaire. Since valid Chi-square analysis requires an expected frequency of at least five for 80% or more of the cells and allows an expected value between 1 and 5 for up to 20% of the cells, it was necessary to combine data for the three institutions. Also necessary was the combination of the categories for length of service and academic rank.

Academic rank, when analyzed with each of the 30 motivators, revealed no significant difference. The categories for academic rank were collapsed into two areas, professor and other (including all other options for rank), and analysis revealed that one motive was significant: to set an example for others ($p=0.03203$), where full professors believed this to be more important than their colleagues. No significant differences were revealed for any of the

other demographic categories.

The third section of the survey related to the perceptions of faculty concerning the fund raising solicitations they received. Three questions relating to fund raising strategies were included to be rated by faculty donors on the same 1-to-5 modified Likert-type scale. Receiving a letter or material in the mail was perceived to be important in raising money from faculty by 42% of the survey respondents, as compared to phone calls and personal visits, both of which were viewed as not important (73% and 67% of the respondents rated these as somewhat important or not important, respectively; see Table 4). Overall, telephone solicitations were perceived to be the most important in raising money, a finding consistent for each of the different institution's faculty.

Conclusions and Discussion

The basic foundation of fund raising importance has changed in higher education, and this change casts this potential revenue source in an even more important light. Dollars generated through fund raising and subsequent endowment management are no longer luxuries designed to provide "margins of excellence," but are vital sources of annual operating funds. Because of this importance, then, college and university fund raising professionals must be aggressive in searching out new markets of potential donors,

one of which is the often overlooked faculty body. College faculty, a highly skilled and trained body of professionals, are often highly dedicated and committed to their institutions, regardless of salary levels. The challenge to fund raising professionals is how to appeal to this group in a manner which will facilitate faculty giving.

The current study was designed as an initial, exploratory effort to profile faculty donors at different types of institutions, and to note if these motivations for giving differ based on work environment expectations. Although some differences were noted between the three institutions faculty, the more revealing finding was the overall lack of agreement with any of the motivational factors. In fact, only one motivator of the 33 was agreed to by any of the faculty groups (institutional loyalty with a mean of 4.0 by liberal arts faculty), with the majority of items being rated in the neutral to disagree range. Thus, the conclusion can be drawn that either faculty are not certain why they give, or, that they disagree with the body of research literature on giving, suggesting a different range of motivations. As an extension of the lack of agreement toward the fund raising motivation factors, study findings do not support the much advocated exchange theory relationship to fund raising.

Taken on face value, study findings do support the construct that faculty support their employing institution

out of loyalty rather than in exchange for a product, good, or benefit. In addition to demonstrating in financial terms their commitment to a school, faculty give because of their professional attitude toward responsibilities as a scholar. Much of higher education's curriculum and environment have been described as hidden or informal, and as institutions rely increasingly on philanthropic money, there appears to be a growing informal or hidden role expectation to provide some support, either as a volunteer or as a donor, to the institution.

The indifference among faculty based on job responsibilities provides a firm representation that faculty members are teachers and scholars first, and that there may indeed be some interchangeability among faculty despite current employment conditions. This finding has serious residual effects for environments which thrive on teaching or research workloads, such as the ability to pirate experienced faculty from regional universities to research universities, the interchanging of faculty to teach in distance learning programs, and the at least partial validation of state mandated articulation agreements.

Faculty are unique, evasive, well-trained and articulate individuals who respond and thrive in environments based on autonomy. Although study findings were not able to firmly define the parameters of faculty giving motivations, the results are valuable as fund raising

professionals expand their efforts into new markets, searching for increased giving. Research such as this will continue to prove valuable as institutions respond to financial difficulties, and in particular, the further understanding of the role of the faculty member in philanthropy and in volunteerism is much needed. Only through developing this understanding will colleges and universities be able to work more effectively and efficiently as they attempt to maximize their resources, decrease costs, and create true learning environments.

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Table 1.

Survey Responses by Institution Type

Type of Institution	Mailed	Returned		Usable	
	N	N	%	N	%
Liberal Arts	111	64	57.7%	49	76.6%
Comprehensive	95	80	84.2	80	100
Research	100	63	63.0	54	85.7
Total	306	207	67.6	183	88.4

Table 2.

Demographic Portrait of Faculty Donors

Characteristic	Compreh		Lib Arts		Resrch		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
<u>Academic Rank</u>								
Professor	37	46%	24	49%	30	56%	91	50%
Associate	25	31	17	35	18	33	60	33
Assistant	15	19	4	8	4	7	23	13
Other	3	4	4	8	2	4	9	5
<u>Length of Service</u>								
0-10 Years	27	34%	16	33%	23	43%	66	36%
11-20 Years	24	30	22	46	18	33	64	35
20+ Years	29	36	10	21	13	24	52	29
<u>Tenure Status</u>								
Tenured	68	85%	40	83%	42	78%	150	82%
Ten-Track	8	10	4	8	5	9	17	9
Non-Ten Track	4	5	4	8	7	13	15	8
<u>Alumni of Employing Institution</u>								
Yes	22	27%	17	35%	1	2%	40	
No	58	72	32	65	53	98	143	

Table 3.

Summary Table for Counts and Means by University Type

Motivator	Compreh		Lib Arts		Resrch		All		Rank
	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	SD	
Altruism	3.1	80	3.3	49	2.9	54	3.08	1.37	6
Professional Attitude	3.5	80	3.4	49	3.1	54	3.34	1.34	2
Celebration ³	2.2	80	2.6	49	1.8	54	2.16	1.29	16
Commemoration	2.4	80	2.9	49	2.0	54	2.44	1.39	15
Conviction ¹	3.3	80	3.9	49	2.9	54	3.34	1.40	3
Preservation of culture	2.6	80	3.2	49	2.7	54	2.80	1.50	9
Expected benefits	1.9	80	1.7	49	1.8	54	1.81	1.14	20
Ego	1.7	80	1.5	49	1.7	54	1.63	1.03	26
Emotional attachment ⁴	2.8	80	3.3	49	2.4	54	2.81	1.41	8
Fear	1.4	80	1.1	49	1.2	54	1.24	.71	30
Guilt	1.4	80	1.3	49	1.4	54	1.37	.80	29
Habit	1.9	80	1.8	49	1.7	54	1.81	1.09	21
Job security	1.8	80	1.3	49	1.5	54	1.57	1.00	27
Institutional loyalty	3.7	80	4.0	49	3.3	54	3.66	1.25	1
Organization mission ⁵	2.7	80	3.1	49	2.3	54	2.67	1.43	10
Moral obligation	2.4	80	2.8	49	2.2	54	2.47	1.40	14

Table 3, continued.

Summary Table for Counts and Means by University Type

Motivator	Compreh		Lib Arts		Resrch		All		Rank
	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	SD	
Community passion	1.8	80	1.8	49	2.0	54	1.88	1.22	19
Power to make policy	1.8	80	1.4	49	1.8	54	1.66	1.07	24
Peer pressure	1.4	80	1.4	49	1.8	54	1.54	1.06	28
Recognition	1.7	80	1.4	49	1.8	54	1.65	1.03	25
Desire to repay for benefit	2.7	80	2.5	49	2.3	54	2.53	1.44	13
Social benefit	2.3	80	1.8	49	1.9	54	2.06	1.25	18
Self-fulfillment ²	3.4	80	3.7	49	2.8	54	3.30	1.34	4
Enlightened self-interest	3.0	80	2.7	49	2.7	54	2.83	1.40	7
Set an example for others	2.3	80	2.7	49	2.7	54	2.54	1.43	12
Social enhancement	1.8	80	1.4	49	1.8	54	1.68	1.10	23
Social responsibility	3.1	80	3.6	49	3.0	54	3.20	1.35	5
Tax benefits	2.9	80	2.3	49	2.3	54	2.59	1.41	11
To participate on a winning team	2.2	80	2.0	49	2.2	54	2.15	1.30	17
Family tradition	1.9	80	1.9	49	1.5	54	1.81	1.22	22

¹p=0.00225; ²p=0.03885; ³p=0.04123; ⁴p=0.00990; ⁵p=0.02281.

Table 4.

Perceived Importance of Fund Raising Solicitations

	Compreh	Lib Arts	Resrch	All	Rank
Technique	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	
Letter or mailed material	2.83	3.39	3.56	3.19	3
Telephone call	4.16	4.23	4.05	4.15	1
Personal visitation	4.10	3.91	3.60	3.90	2